

# 92 Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe nouns. In English, they usually come before the noun that they are describing. There are several categories of adjective.

See also:

Singular and plural nouns 69

## 92.1 USING ADJECTIVES

Adjectives in English are usually placed before the noun they describe. They do not change form to agree with the noun.

He is a **busy** man.



She is a **busy** woman.



Adjectives are the same for nouns that describe males or females.

It is a **busy** town.



These are **busy** streets.



Adjectives are the same for singular and plural nouns.

## FURTHER EXAMPLES



This is a **red** shirt.

These are **tall** buildings.



It's a **cold** day.

She does **great** concerts.



## 92.2 OTHER WAYS TO USE ADJECTIVES

Sometimes, adjectives can be put after a verb such as "be" or "become."

The adjective can go at the end of the sentence after the verb "be."

The town is **busy**.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES



That house is **beautiful**.



He is **annoyed**.

The noun can be replaced with a pronoun.



The cake is **delicious**.



She is very **tired**.



Natalie's dress is **long**.

### 92.3 TYPES OF FACT ADJECTIVES

Fact adjectives tell you a particular fact about the noun they are describing. There are many different categories of fact adjectives.

Size

The children saw an **enormous** dog. 

Shape

It's a **round** ball. 

Age

My great-grandmother is very **old**. 

Color

Nicole just loves her **red** hat. 

Nationality

I love eating **French** pastries. 

Material

I've bought some **leather** shoes. 


### 92.4 TYPES OF OPINION ADJECTIVES

Opinion adjectives describe what somebody thinks about something.

General opinion adjectives can describe lots of different things.

Specific opinion adjectives can only usually describe a certain type of thing.

General opinion

I just bought a very **nice** guitar. 

"Nice" is a general opinion adjective. It can describe lots of different things.






Specific opinion

Sylvester is such a **friendly** cat! 

"Friendly" is a specific opinion adjective. It usually only describes people or animals.

## 92.5 ADJECTIVE ORDER

When several adjectives are used together before a noun, they must go in a particular order. Opinion adjectives come before fact adjectives. General opinion adjectives always come before specific opinion adjectives, and the order of fact adjectives in a sentence depends on the type of fact that they describe.

	 GENERAL OPINION	 SPECIFIC OPINION	 SIZE	 SHAPE	 AGE
Brie is a		delicious		round	
He's a	nice	intelligent			young
I love your					new
That's a	lovely		little		
OPINION ADJECTIVES			FACT ADJECTIVES		

## 92.6 ADJECTIVES WITH “-ING” AND “-ED”

### “-ING” ADJECTIVES

Adjectives that end in “-ing” describe the effect something has.

**The spider is frightening.**

The spider causes fright.

### “-ED” ADJECTIVES

Adjectives ending in “-ed” describe how something is affected.

**The man is frightened.**

The man experiences fright.





## TIP

English doesn't usually use more than three adjectives in a row to describe something.

	COLOR	NATIONALITY	MATERIAL
		French	
green			
			china

cheese.

Brie is a **delicious** **round** **French** cheese.



man.

He's a **nice**, **intelligent** **young** man.



dress.

I love your **new** **green** dress.



cup.

That's a **lovely** **little** **china** cup.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES

The fireworks are **amazing**.  
She is **amazed**.



The wasp is **annoying**.  
He is **annoyed**.



The roller coaster was **thrilling**.  
They were **thrilled**.



The vacation is **relaxing**.  
He is **relaxed**.



I found the book too **confusing**.  
I was **confused** the whole time.



Your lecture was **interesting**.  
I was **interested** by your lecture.



The final scene was really **shocking**.  
Everyone was really **shocked**.



That film was very **boring**.  
I was very **bored**.



# Gradable and non-gradable adjectives

Gradable adjectives can be made weaker or stronger by adverbs, whereas non-gradable adjectives describe absolute qualities that cannot usually be graded.

See also:

Adjectives 92

Adverbs of degree 100

## 93.1 GRADABLE ADJECTIVES

Gradable adjectives can be modified by adverbs to make the adjective's original meaning more or less powerful.

Adverbs change the strength of the adjective.

Things can be more or less "good," so it is a gradable adjective.

This book is **very** good!



This book is **fairly** good.



This book is **not very** good.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES



Edmund is **extremely** talented.



Edmund is **reasonably** talented.



Edmund is **not particularly** talented.



This soup is **really** tasty!



This soup is **pretty** tasty.



This soup is **not very** tasty at all.

## 93.2 NON-GRADABLE ADJECTIVES

Non-gradable adjectives cannot usually be modified. These adjectives tend to fall into three categories: extreme, absolute, and classifying.



Non-gradable adjectives like "fantastic" cannot be modified by adverbs.

Her arguments were **fantastic**!

### EXTREME ADJECTIVES

Extreme adjectives are stronger versions of gradable adjectives, such as "awful," "hilarious," "fantastic," or "terrifying."

The idea of "extremely" is the meaning of "awful" already.

Her presentation was **awful**.

### ABSOLUTE ADJECTIVES

Absolute adjectives cannot be graded because they describe fixed qualities or states, such as "unique," "perfect," or "impossible."

It is not possible for something to be more or less unique.

She has a **unique** presenting style.

### CLASSIFYING ADJECTIVES

Classifying adjectives are used to say that something is of a specific type or class, such as "American," "nuclear," or "medical."

The audience was **American**.

## FURTHER EXAMPLES

It's **boiling** in here. Can we open a window?



I am **certain** that he is the right person for the job.



I'm **terrified** of spiders and snakes!



Let's go for a walk. The weather outside is **perfect**.



# 94 Comparative adjectives

Comparative adjectives are used to compare two things. They can either be formed by adding the suffix “-er,” or by putting “more” or “less” before the adjective.

See also:

Singular and plural nouns 69

Adjectives 92

## 94.1 COMPARATIVE ADJECTIVES

For most adjectives with one or two syllables, “-er” is added to make the comparative.

Ahmed is **tall**.  
Ahmed is **taller** **than** Jonathan.

“-er” is added to make the comparative.

“Than” is used to introduce the thing that the subject is being compared to.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES



Dean is **stronger** **than** Carlos.

A plane is **faster** **than** a train.



5°F is **colder** **than** 85°F.

Sanjay is **younger** **than** Tina.



Emma is **older** **than** Sharon.

My friends are **quicker** **than** me.



## ⚠ COMMON MISTAKES “THAN” WITH COMPARATIVES

“Then” and “than” can easily be confused because they sound similar, but it is never correct to use “then” to form a comparative.

Ahmed is **taller** **than** Jonathan. ✓

The correct word to use in comparatives is “than.”

Ahmed is taller **then** Jonathan. ✗

“Then” sounds similar to “than,” but it is not correct to use “then” after a comparative.



## 94.2 FORMING COMPARATIVES

There are different rules for forming comparatives depending on the ending of the simple form of the adjective.

ADJECTIVE

close

early

big

COMPARATIVE

closer

earlier

bigger

If the adjective ends in  
"-e," just an "-r" is added.

For some adjectives ending  
in "-y," the "-y" is removed  
and "-ier" added.

For single-syllable adjectives  
ending consonant-vowel-  
consonant, the final letter is  
doubled and "-er" added.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES



An elephant is **larger**  
**than** a rhino.



My bedroom is **tidier**  
**than** my sister's.



Spain is **hotter**  
**than** England.

## 94.3 IRREGULAR COMPARATIVES

Some common adjectives have irregular comparatives.

ADJECTIVE

good

bad

far

COMPARATIVE

better

worse

farther (US)  
further (UK)

### TIP

In US English,  
"further" and "furthest"  
are used to describe  
figurative (not physical)  
distances.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES



The house is **farther**  
**away than** the tree.



Jill got a **better**  
**grade than** John.



London has **worse**  
**weather than** Paris.



## 94.4 COMPARATIVES WITH LONG ADJECTIVES

For some two-syllable adjectives and adjectives with three syllables or more, "more" and "than" are used to make the comparative.



This beach is **more beautiful** **than** that one.

The adjective "beautiful" has three syllables, so "beautifuller" is not correct.

"More" can be replaced by "less" to give the opposite meaning.



This beach is **less beautiful** **than** that one.

### HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT + VERB

"MORE / LESS"

ADJECTIVE

"THAN"

REST OF SENTENCE

This beach is

**more**

**less**

**beautiful**

**than**

**that one.**

### FURTHER EXAMPLES



Spiders are **more frightening** **than** wasps.



For me, history is **less difficult** **than** science.



This book is **more interesting** **than** that one.



Walking is **less tiring** **than** running.



This dress is **more glamorous** **than** I expected.



My job is **less exciting** **than** I'd hoped.

## 94.5 TWO-FORM COMPARATIVES

Some two-syllable adjectives have two possible comparative forms. Either the comparative ending can be added, or "more" can be used before the adjective.



My cat is { **friendlier**  
**more friendly** } **than** my dog.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES



The garage is { **narrower**  
**more narrow** } **than** the car.



The lake is { **shallower**  
**more shallow** } **than** the sea.



This puzzle is { **simpler**  
**more simple** } **than** that one.



My parrot is { **quieter**  
**more quiet** } **than** yours.



This party is { **livelier**  
**more lively** } **than** yours.



The driver is { **angrier**  
**more angry** } **than** the cyclist.

### COMMON MISTAKES FORMING COMPARATIVES

When forming comparatives, it is incorrect to add "more" before the adjective if it already has a comparative ending.

He's **more friendly** than her. ✓

He's **friendlier** than her. ✓

He's **more friendlier** than her. ✗

"Friendlier" and "more friendly" are correct, but "more friendlier" is not.

## 94.6 ADJECTIVES WITH MODIFIERS

Modifiers can go before comparatives to make comparisons stronger or weaker.

The tree is { **a lot**  
**much** } taller **than** the building.

Modifier Comparative



These modifiers mean there is a big difference between the things you are comparing.

These modifiers mean there is only a small difference between the things you are comparing.

The tree is { **a bit**  
**slightly** } taller **than** the building.



The palace is { **much**  
**far** } more beautiful **than** the factory.

With long comparatives, the modifier goes before "more."

Form long comparatives by putting "more" before the adjective.



### FURTHER EXAMPLES

The mountain is **much** taller **than** the hill.



The house is **a bit** taller **than** the statue.



The castle is **slightly** bigger **than** the hotel.



The dress is **a lot** more expensive **than** the shoes.



### COMMON MISTAKES USING "VERY" WITH COMPARATIVES

It is incorrect to modify comparatives with "very."

The tree is **much** taller **than** the building. ✓

The tree is very taller than the building. ✗



# 95 Two comparatives together

Two comparatives can be used together in a sentence to show the effect of an action. They are also used to show that something is changing.

See also:

Comparative adjectives 94

## 95.1 COMPARATIVES SHOWING CAUSE AND EFFECT

Pairing two phrases that use comparative adjectives is a way of making comparisons that show cause and effect.



The **harder** I train, the **stronger** I get.

Implies that training results in getting stronger.

## FURTHER EXAMPLES



The **worse** the children behave, the **angrier** the teacher gets.



The **louder** the cat meows, the **louder** the dog barks.

## HOW TO FORM



## 95.2 SHORTENING COMPARATIVE PHRASES

Double comparatives that end with "the better" are often shortened where the context makes the meaning obvious to the listener.

How do you like your tea?



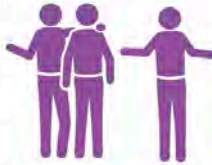
The **stronger** the **better**.

The **stronger** [the tea is,] the **better** [it tastes].

These words are implied, or understood, and can be left out.

"The more the merrier" is a phrase that means when more people are at an event, the better it will be.

Can I bring my brother along?

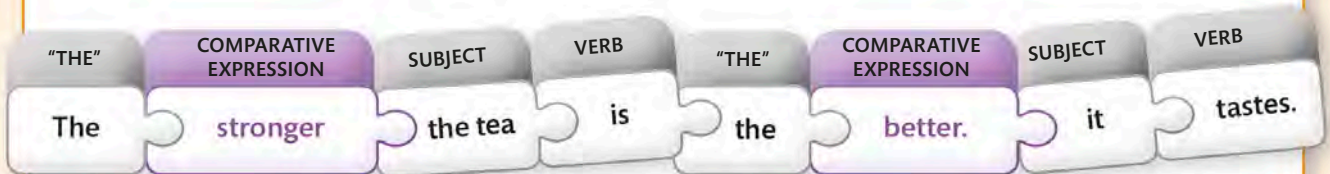


Sure! The **more** the **merrier**.

This expression means people are welcome.

The **more** [people come,] the **merrier** [the party will be].

### HOW TO FORM



### FURTHER EXAMPLES

What time do we need to leave?



The **sooner** the **better**.

Do we need to take a big suitcase?



Yes. The **bigger** the **better**.

### 95.3 COMPARATIVES SHOWING CHANGE

A comparative can be repeated to show that something is changing. This expression emphasizes the change, and is often used to describe extremes.



The weather is getting **colder** and **colder**.

The repetition emphasizes that the change is continuing.

"And" goes between the repeated comparatives.

#### FURTHER EXAMPLES

The tree outside my house is growing **taller** and **taller**.



The car went **faster** and **faster** down the hill.



### 95.4 LONG COMPARATIVES SHOWING CHANGE

In two comparatives that go with long adjectives, "more" is repeated but the adjective is not.



Houses are getting **more** and **more** expensive.

"More" is repeated.

The adjective is only used once, after the second "more."

#### FURTHER EXAMPLES



His music is getting **more** and **more** annoying.



My job has become **more** and **more** stressful.



# 96 "As... as" comparisons

Comparisons using "as... as" constructions can be used to discuss degrees of similarity and difference. They can be modified with adverbs to make them stronger or weaker.

See also:

Adjectives 92

Adverbs of degree 100

## 96.1 "AS... AS" COMPARISONS

"As... as" comparisons are used with an adjective to compare things that are similar.

Lisa is **as** tall **as** Marc.

The adjective is in its normal form.



Penny is **not** **as** tall **as** Marc.

"Not" makes the sentence negative.

"So" is only used in negative comparisons.



## HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT + VERB

"AS"

ADJECTIVE

"AS"

REST OF SENTENCE

Lisa is

as

tall

as

Marc.

## FURTHER EXAMPLES



Will today be **as** hot **as** yesterday?



Your desk is **as** messy **as** mine.



The bus is **not so** crowded **as** the train.



Jenny is **not as** busy **as** Will.

## 96.2 "AS... AS" COMPARISONS WITH MODIFIERS

Modifiers can be added to "as... as" comparisons to make them more detailed or to add emphasis.



Emphasizing equality.

Bottled water is **just as** expensive **as** coffee.



Comparing similarity.

The girls were **almost as** loud **as** the boys.



This has a very similar meaning to "almost as" but contrasts the difference rather than comparing the similarity.

The movie is **not quite as** good **as** the book.



Specific degree of difference.

The bike is **half as** long **as** the car.



Emphasizing difference.

The mouse is **nowhere near as** big **as** the bird.

### FURTHER EXAMPLES

Sita is **almost as** frightened **as** Justin.



George is **almost as** tired **as** Hetty.



I think fruit is **just as** delicious **as** cake.



Seth is **nowhere near as** old **as** Mabel.



The door is **half as** wide **as** the window.



The skyscraper is **not quite as** tall **as** the mountain.



# 97 Superlative adjectives

Superlative adjectives, such as “the biggest” or “the smallest,” are used to talk about extremes. Long adjectives take “most” and “least” to show an extreme.

See also:

Articles 63 Adjectives 92

Comparative adjectives 94

## 97.1 SUPERLATIVE ADJECTIVES

For most adjectives with one or two syllables, “-est” is added to make the superlative.

Horses are faster than dogs,  
but cheetahs are **the fastest** land animals.

The comparative describes the difference between two things.

The definite article (“the”) is always used before the superlative.

The superlative describes which thing is the most extreme.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES



Giraffes are **the tallest** animals in the world.



Blue whales are **the largest** animals in the world.



Sloths are **the slowest** animals in the zoo.



Dolphins are **the smartest** animals in the world.

## HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT + VERB

Cheetahs are

“THE” + SUPERLATIVE

**the fastest**

REST OF SENTENCE

land animals.



## 97.2 FORMING SUPERLATIVES

There are different rules for forming superlatives depending on the ending of the simple form of the adjective.

ADJECTIVE

close

early

big

SUPERLATIVE

closest

earliest

biggest

If the adjective ends in "-e," "-st" is added.

For some adjectives ending in "-y," the "-y" is removed and "-iest" added.

For adjectives ending consonant-vowel-consonant, the final letter is doubled and "-est" is added.

### EXAMPLES



Driving is **the easiest** way to get there.



The firefighter was **the bravest** person I'd ever met.



This has been **the hottest** summer in years!

## 97.3 IRREGULAR SUPERLATIVES

Some common adjectives have irregular superlatives.

ADJECTIVE

good

bad

far

SUPERLATIVE

best

worst

farthest (US)  
furthest (UK)

### EXAMPLES



School days are **the best** days of your life.



I was **the worst** at drawing in my art class.



I lived **the farthest** from school of all my friends.

## 97.4 SUPERLATIVES WITH LONG ADJECTIVES

For some two-syllable adjectives and for adjectives of three syllables or more, use "the most" or "the least" before the adjective to form the superlative.



The motorcycle is more expensive than the scooter, but the sports car is **the most expensive** vehicle.

"The most" is used with the adjective.

The adjective stays the same. "Expensivest" is not a valid form.

The motorcycle is less expensive than the sports car, but the scooter is **the least expensive** vehicle.

"The least" means the opposite of "the most."

### HOW TO FORM

SUBJECT + VERB	"THE" + MOST / LEAST	ADJECTIVE	REST OF SENTENCE
This is	<b>the most</b>	<b>expensive</b>	dish on the menu.
	<b>the least</b>		

### FURTHER EXAMPLES

The science museum is **the most interesting** museum in town.



This is **the least comfortable** chair in the room.



The Twister is **the most exciting** ride in the theme park.



Teacups are **the least enjoyable** ride in the theme park.





## COMMON MISTAKES FORMING SUPERLATIVES

When forming superlatives, it is incorrect to add "most" before the adjective if it already has a superlative ending.

"Best" is already a superlative adjective so "most" is unnecessary.

I am **most best** at running. ❌

I am the **best** at running. ✅

## 97.5 SUPERLATIVES WITH MODIFIERS

"Easily" or "by far" can make superlative adjectives more specific.

"One of" shows that the superlative belongs to a group of things.



The clock tower is **easily by far** the **tallest** building in the town.

These modifiers make the superlative stronger.

"One of" makes the superlative part of a group.

With long superlatives the modifier goes before "the."

The clock tower is **one of the most imposing** buildings in the town.

If "one of" is used with superlatives, the noun must be in plural form.



## FURTHER EXAMPLES

Sally is **easily the tallest** person I know.



This hostel is **by far the cheapest** place to stay.



Tim is **easily the shortest** person I know.



The Grand is **by far the most expensive** place to stay.



Physics is **one of the most confusing** subjects I study.



English is **one of the least complicated** subjects I study.

